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Friday, July 27, 2007

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Careworker accused of sexual assault

By [Daniel Pepper](#)
Staff Writer

Wednesday, July 25, 2007 9:39 AM EDT

A Benton Harbor man has been accused of sexually assaulting a resident at the adult foster care facility where he worked.

Edgar Cortes Jimenez, 22, was arrested Thursday, July 19, after an investigation at the Cornerstone Adult Foster Care Residence in Cheshire Township by the Allegan County Sheriff Department and the Michigan Department of Human Services. Jimenez was arraigned Friday, July 20, in Allegan County District Court on charges of third-degree criminal sexual conduct and fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct against a vulnerable adult. He pleaded not guilty.

The sheriff department began investigating the charges Thursday, July 19.

According to the sheriff department, investigation continues into whether there might be more victims.

"Right now, it looks like a single victim," sheriff's Lt. Scott Matice said. "Some of the other residents at the home are very severely disabled to where they can't communicate, so it's hard to determine if any other assaults might have taken place."

Jimenez worked as a caretaker in the home, according to the sheriff department.

The sheriff department said the residence's management cooperated with the investigation.

Jimenez was lodged in the Allegan County Jail and bond is set at \$25,000.

Dan Pepper can be reached at dpepper@allegannews.com or at (269) 673-5534.



Edgar Cortes Jimenez



FRIDAY
July 27, 2007

Weather for Cadillac
Cloudy
Time: 11:00 am
Temp: 75
RealFeel Temp: 85
Humidity: 73
Winds: Calm

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[Cadillac man, woman arraigned on drug charges](#)

CADILLAC — A 24-year-old Cadillac woman and a 22-year-old Cadillac man were arraigned on drug and child abuse charges in 84th District Court.

Angel Marie Blackledge and Westley Wayne Miller were arraigned on charges of delivery/manufacture of marijuana, conspiracy to deliver/manufacture marijuana, two counts of possession of analogues, maintaining a drug house, possession of marijuana and child abuse second degree.

Each faces four years and \$20,000 for the delivery charge, four years and \$30,000 for the conspiracy charge, two years and \$2,000 for the analogues charge, two years and \$25,000 for the drug house charge, one year and \$2,000 for the marijuana possession charge and four years for the child abuse charge.

The charges follow an April 11, 2007 incident in Cadillac, court records indicate.

Blackledge and Miller were released on their own personal recognizance. A pretrial is scheduled for 9 a.m. on Wednesday.

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Background: In my recent blog post [If You See a Father Holding His Child's Hand, Call the Cops!](#), I called attention to the man-bashing Virginia Department of Health poster pictured above. I wrote:

"If dad goes for a walk with his daughter and holds her hand, apparently [Virginia Department of Health](#) officials wants you to pick up the phone and destroy his life by reporting him as a possible sexual abuser. I would've thought this article about this campaign was from The Onion or some satirical publication, but it's for real. The picture above of a man holding a child's hand--a touching little scene--is actually supposed to make us think he's sexually abusing the child. Unbelievable."

[Rush Limbaugh](#) saw my commentary on the issue and covered it on his nationally-syndicated broadcast--to read the transcript of his comments or to listen to the radio archive, click [here](#).

The [Charlottesville Weekly](#) covers this controversy--with a decided slant against Limbaugh and I--in the "news" article below. To write a Letter to the Editor, write to Editor-in-Chief Cathryn Harding at editor@c-ville.com.

[Health department ad riles the right: Campaign aimed at child sex abuse ticks off Limbaugh, father advocates](#)

By Meg McEvoy

C-VILLE WEEKLY, 07/24/2007 - 07/30/2007

The poster is a simple design—black and white over a purple background, a man's hand cupping the tiny palm of a child. The tag line reads: "It doesn't feel right when I see them together."

This poster has raised the ire of fathers' rights fighters like Rush Limbaugh, who feel it alleges all hand-holding daddies are also sexual delinquents.

The poster comes from the Stop It Now! campaign from the Virginia Department of Health that asks adults to try to spot the signs of child sex abuse and call a confidential hotline to seek advice or make a report.

But the campaign recently took heat from father advocates who say the poster goes too far. "If you see a father holding his child's hand, call the cops!" reads a blog post from Glenn [Sacks](#), a "men's and fathers'" issues columnist, commentator and radio talk show host. Sacks called the posters "man-bashing."

Rush Limbaugh picked up on Sacks' post: "You're going to have some oddball feminists or people that believe that garbage running around the malls, the grocery stores...and this poor guy is going to get a visit from somebody," he ranted.

The Stop It Now! program has been in Virginia since 2005, but recently rolled out the posters and expanded to different regions.

Becky Odor, director of Sexual & [Domestic Violence Prevention](#), stands by the campaign. "We worked with a marketing firm in D.C.—American Institutes for Research. ...It was a very difficult process." Odor says the image was chosen because it was simple and does not sexualize children. The tag line is appropriate because "the campaign focuses on encouraging people to trust their 'gut' feelings," says Odor. The campaign's website also lists warning signs for adults who might be unsure what behaviors to spot, including grownups who have no adult friends or who insist on physical contact with kids even when they protest.

"Over the 18 months of the campaign in Virginia, the helpline staff has not received any calls from someone who perceived handholding as a warning sign of abuse," Odor says via e-mail. As for the supposed gender discrimination, Odor points out that 89 percent of child abuse perpetrators in Virginia are male.

[Walker Thornton](#) with the local Sexual Assault Resource Agency (SARA), says the campaign is "a little unusual" because it appeals to members of the public who may not be used to reporting abuse. But Thornton says child sex abuse is a serious issue locally. In the past year, 53 children in the five-county area were reported to SARA as abused.

- Weekend construction on I-96 delayed

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Published July 27, 2007

Local news briefs

Mason man, 35, to stand trial on charge of soliciting a minor online

MASON - A 35-year-old Mason man accused of trying to solicit a minor online for sex will stand trial, a judge ruled Thursday.

Prosecutors say Hugh Carl Brayton III chatted online with an undercover agent posing as a 14-year-old girl and twice tried to solicit the agent for sexual acts.

Judge Thomas Boyd determined at a preliminary hearing in 55th District Court that there is sufficient evidence to send the case to trial. No court dates have been set.

Brayton, who is free on a \$10,000 bond, is charged with two counts of using a computer to solicit a minor as well as two counts of using a computer to distribute sexually explicit material to a minor. He faces up to 10 years in prison.



Man charged with molesting girl

By Norb Franz
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A Warren man faces up to life in prison on charges he sexually molested a young female relative.

Michael Steven Patino, 37, who resides on Wellington, was jailed in lieu of \$100,000 cash/surety bond following his arraignment Thursday before 37th District Judge Dawnn Gruenburg.

He faces two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct -- which involves penetration -- and two counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct, police said.

Warren Detective Lt. John Stano said the girl told another family member about the alleged contact. That person contacted police.

"It appears from this statement that this happened over a period of time," Stano said.

"We responded to (Patino's) address, interviewed all the parties involved and determined there was enough probable cause to make the arrest, and the arrest was made."

Officers took Patino into custody without difficulty. He has made statements to detectives, but Stano declined to elaborate on the suspect's remarks.

Investigators refused to divulge the location in the city where the alleged sexual misconduct occurred.

The girl is under 13 years of age, a legal factor in first-degree criminal sexual conduct cases. The Macomb Daily typically does not name victims of sexual assault who are minors. The newspaper currently is not publishing her exact age to avoid potential identification.

A court preliminary hearing to determine whether Patino should stand trial is scheduled for Aug. 9.

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http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/072707/loc_charged001.shtml

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Do homework in looking at daycares

Updated: July 27, 2007 07:27 AM EDT

By PATRICK CENTER

ADA - Officials at [Milestones Child Development Center](#) are saddened by allegations that one of their employees, Matthew Eggleston, sexually assaulted a four-year-old student.

[Eggleston was charged Tuesday](#), and the center said they are fully cooperating with authorities.

The facility has few blemishes on its state record. So, if you're a parent, how do you know who you're leaving your kids with each day?

Jennifer Griffith of [Kent Regional 4-C](#) helps "parents find childcare in the six counties we serve." Parents provide preferences and 4-C provides a list of centers and references. They make no recommendations, but offer plenty of information.

One tool to use is the [Michigan Department of Human Services](#) web site, especially the [licensing and requirements](#) area. Log in a name of a daycare, and, said Griffith, "initially you get their license number, name, city, state, zip."

The state inspection and renewal licensing reports are at your fingertips. Look at the special investigation reports and look for red flags when reviewing. Keep an eye out for staff screening procedures and posted notices about criminal history and central registry checks.

Griffith told 24 Hour News 8 center operators are fingerprinted and staff criminal records run through the Michigan State Police.

Centers are supposed to be inspected annually by the Department of Human Services, but with a freeze on hiring, that's not always the case.

"They're short-staffed," Griffith said. "They are not able to maybe meet the demand of doing all of the inspections." That's why it's important for parents to do their own inspection. "Ask questions. Set up an interview time. We encourage them to interview at least two or three places."

On the Net:

[Michigan Department of Human Services](#)

[Kent Regional 4-C](#)



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Article published Jul 26, 2007

Garden party raises \$240K for child care

Another fundraising record was broken yesterday as the Women's Caring Program (WCP) raised \$240,000 to help financially struggling families cover the cost of child care.

The funds raised will provide 130 low-income parents with some much-needed economic relief for one year, as well as the peace of mind knowing their children are in a high-quality, licensed childcare setting.

"Childcare is wildly expensive. This makes a tremendous difference for my family," said Robbie Flowers of Ann Arbor. "With the state, you are seen as a number and paperwork on someone's desk. They don't see you as someone who is working hard and trying to do what you are supposed to do.

With the Childcare Commitment program, they got to know me, they were always so nice and they always treated me as an actual person. That's important.

"This has given me a little wriggle room for other necessities. Now I have an extra \$205 per month I can put toward car repairs or to buy more groceries. Or when my daughter's (childcare) teacher told me her bathing suit was too small, I was able to get her a new one at such ritzy places as Target, instead of going to a thrift store. I can feel comfortable to go out and spend money on what really are essentials."

Since its inception in 1999, 803 families have been have received ChildCare Commitment grants. Today, 131 families in 31 counties are receiving ChildCare assistance grants. There are, however, 330 families are on the program's waiting list — more than double the waiting list of 2006. And the need still growing.

The Twilight Gathering is the single annual fund-raiser held by the WCP to support the ChildCare Commitment program. Since 1995, the WCP has raised more than \$1.75 million for low-income children. The WCP is the only non-profit group in Michigan and nationally raising funds to help financially struggling families afford quality, licensed child care.

"We are grateful for the ChildCare Commitment program's role in developing the human and economic potential of the communities we serve," said Paul Hillegonds, DTE Energy senior vice president, corporate affairs, and DTE Energy Foundation board member. Since 2005, the DTE Energy Foundation has contributed \$14,000 to the ChildCare Commitment program.

"The evidence is overwhelming that our investment in the nurturing and education of our children during their pre-school years will prepare them for a lifetime of success. Especially in these hard economic times, we must make quality childcare more accessible for families of the working poor."

Gaylen Curtis, trustee of the Edgar and Agnes Cochrane Foundation, which has contributed \$28,500 to the ChildCare Commitment program since 2005, learned of the WCP by reading a newspaper article on it.

"I liked the idea of helping people that really are doing all they can do and they just still come up short," said Curtis. "What also appealed to me is the intangible value for people who get a sense that there is an organization that cares about them. It just does something very good for people who might otherwise get discouraged. I think that's a big part of the Women's Caring Program."

Celebrating its 28th year, the WCP's garden party fund-raiser in Milford is now a statewide summer staple, attracting 600 women. The heart of the party remains what it was when the WCP began in 1979: friendship, laughter, food and fun.

Amid founder Carol Walter's lush, rolling gardens, the Twilight Gathering pampers guests with exquisitely prepared, elegant food by Executive Chef and WCP board member Mary Brady of Diamond Jim Brady's Bistro in Novi, refreshing drinks, sparkling conversation and great music.

The WCP's silent auction continued its unrivaled reputation, raising more than \$23,300 with more than 200 items including a seven-night stay in the Dominican Republic; spa, dining and shopping packages; handcrafted glasses, clothing, furniture and jewelry; a night's stay at the Ritz Carlton Chicago; art, gardening supplies, gadgets and accessories; yoga classes and massage sessions; two roundtrip Northwest Airline tickets; a tandem skydiving package; golf weekends at the Grand Traverse Resort; Aveda and Arbonne products; Swarovski crystals; gourmet food and so much more.

Individual tickets to the event for 2008 remain at \$100. Individual and corporate donations are welcomed year-round.

For further information and/or to receive an invitation to the 2008 Twilight Gathering, contact Women's Caring Program at rsvp@womenscaringprogram.org or (248) 415-1442.; or visit on-line at womenscaringprogram.org.

Commit to fixing foster care system

July 27, 2007

Twenty years ago, we blamed the problems in foster care in part on a lack of computers; now we blame the problems on the limits of computer programming ("Report faults foster licensing; State computers share blame in boy's death," July 22).

The beating death of Isaac Lethbridge was not the result of deficient licensing rules or computer glitches; it was the result of a failure by workers to be in that home and enforce basic standards of care.

Centralized records that are updated and easily accessed by workers are a great help in understanding family history and making good placement decisions, but they are no panacea. To assess and meet the complex needs of children and families in the Michigan Foster Care system, workers need to have appropriate training and the time to establish relationships.

There must be regular communication among all agencies involved in the case, and every provider needs to be held accountable for what they contribute or fail to contribute to the process.

There are tremendous systemic problems in the foster care system that can be corrected if every individual in this state makes child welfare a top priority, commits to strengthening casework services and demands that the Legislature fund it accordingly.

Mary Therese Lemanek
Allen Park

Insure poor children

The state Children's Health Insurance Program (S-Chip) needs to be funded to make sure our poorer children receive adequate health care ("Get more children on health coverage," July 24). Many times I have seen sick or injured prisoners in Michigan hospitals, occupying a private room and having a 24-hour guard at government expense. If our government feels convicted felons are human beings worthy of health care, what do they think of our uninsured children?

Frank Zaski
Franklin



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Published July 26, 2007

More letters to the editor

Aid foster kids

Where are our governor's priorities? She really has them wrong.

Prisoners receive better treatment than foster children.

Prisoners have decent meals, computers, gyms and education classes and their medical and dental needs taken care of.

They get rehabilitation because they are criminals.

Now for our foster children, who are the victims of abuse.

They are taken from their homes and placed in some homes that are far worse than what they came from.

They have only one medical and dental clinic to go to. Try getting into them!

They get no special help in education. They need to be able to graduate, have job training and whatever they need before getting thrown on the street.

What rehabilitation does the governor have available for them?

She, being a mother, should be more sensitive to the needs of children.

Let's fight for the foster children's rights! They need us!

Sharon Stacher

Lansing



Man gets 20-50 years for murder

Of The Oakland Press

A professed druid who strangled a 19-year-old woman who had befriended him learned Thursday he will spend at least 20 years in prison, the most the judge could give.

Oakland County Circuit Judge Nanci Grant sentenced John Jordan Anderson, 24, to a 20-to-50-year prison term for his seconddegree murder conviction in the April 27, 2006, slaying of Natasha Miller at the Proud Lake State Recreation Area in Milford.

Anderson, of Commerce Township, confessed to Milford and Oakland County Sheriff's detectives that he had strangled Miller after learning she planned to marry someone else. But at his trial, his attorney Jerome Sabbota said Anderson denied killing Miller.

On Thursday, Miller was remembered by her still-grieving loved ones as the "heart of the family," as the baby girl who always maintained a bright and optimistic spirit.

Grant noted that kindness, referring to a gas station surveillance video that showed Miller with Anderson just one hour before he killed her. That video countered Anderson's initial account of not being with her that night, though later he admitted killing Miller, even taking detectives to the scene at Powers Beach where it occurred.

"To see Tasha with you, and she's smiling, and she's smiling at you," Grant said. "She seems like a typical 19-year-old girl, a carefree, loving, friendly girl."

An hour later, she would be dead, Grant said.

"It is as if we all want to stop the time right there," Grant said of the video.

The judge said she could believe that Anderson did love Miller. But Grant said Anderson "blew all (respect) away" by driving a friend to Grand Rapids just a few hours later and going "on with your life as if nothing happened."

But for Miller's family, the loss of the baby in the family is a pain that will never go away.

"I want you to know how hard it is every day to be without my 19-year-old daughter," said mother Lois Barney of Milford. "It's not right that he can take a life and one day walk out of prison. We don't have her for the rest of our lives, and that's not right. All we have are our memories."

Miller's elder sister, Lisa Whiting of Farmington Hills, said she fears Anderson will one day kill again, based on what he did to "the one who always saw the good in people."

"I never want a family to lose someone like we have," Whiting said, crying.

Throughout the sentencing, the shackled Anderson stared impassively ahead - until Miller's sisters broke down crying, then Anderson put his head downward.

When Anderson was allowed to speak, he slightly smirked as he addressed the judge in a quiet voice.

He spent several minutes explaining that he did not know what to say.

"I've given a lot of thought as to what happened," Anderson said.

But he finished by saying he did not regret meeting and befriending Miller, saying: "A lot of things in my life became better after I met her."

He neither apologized for, nor admitted to, what a jury believed he did. He did not deny it, either.

Sentencing guidelines ranged from 12 to 20 years for a minimum term, and Grant said she wanted to give Anderson the most time she could.

Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Paul Walton vowed his office would push the parole board to ensure Anderson serves the 50 years.

Sabbota had asked for leniency, noting Anderson's difficult childhood.

"He was neglected as a young man," Sabbota said. "He never really knew his parents."

But Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Tricia Dare said Anderson deserved the 20-year term.

"She truly cared about him, and she trusted him, and now she is dead," Dare said. "He has shown no remorse for his actions."

Grant did appreciate Anderson's difficult upbringing - a life in foster care after being neglected as a child by parents with drug problems - but said that was no excuse for killing another person.

"I wonder what kind of person you would have been if you grew up in what we call a typical, loving two-parent family," Grant said.

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Health-care woes shape bottom line

Posted by [Jackson Citizen Patriot](#) July 27, 2007 09:00AM

Categories: [Editorial](#)

The following is the Jackson Citizen Patriot's editorial for July 27:

Foote Hospital just finished its 2007 fiscal year with a \$6 million profit from its operations. It was a solid year by most measures, but the bottom line was tempered by some troubling signs. More and more people can't pay their bills for care, a situation that over time drives up how much we all pay. What this reveals isn't a shortcoming within the hospital itself -- far from it -- but a health-care system in dire need of a trip to the emergency room.

Like many health-care providers, our local hospital would have done much better financially if not for the huge numbers of patients whose bills weren't paid in full. The numbers are mind-numbing: a \$39 million loss from "charity care" (patients who can't afford to pay) and bad debt (folks who didn't pay), plus another \$28.5 million from Medicare and Medicaid payments that fell short. All together, Foote should have collected \$67.5 million more for medical services than it did -- almost \$400 for every person who lives in Jackson County. That the health system could still make money should be a point of pride.

There's a reason we pour over these numbers. Foote is the community's hospital, and its financial health affects all of us. The growing costs it must absorb year after year ultimately are passed along to everyone in this community through higher health-insurance costs and even in the number of jobs the hospital creates. On a positive note, Foote has added more than 400 positions in the last three years, has invested in a new emergency room and is poised to grow more when it begins performing heart surgeries.

What we all can glean from Foote's recent financial report card is that there's a need -- one that is only getting worse -- for changes to the health-care system. An obvious point? Perhaps, but remedies are still slow in coming, and the health-care crisis is not front and center on the nation's agenda. There's a lot of talk about it, but no firm solutions.

Hospitals like Foote, physicians and community groups all have worked to cover the uninsured, yet the dollar figure from unpaid hospital bills keeps climbing. In this state, meanwhile, officials grapple with a Medicaid system that eats a bigger chunk of every dollar that government spends. Without meaningful action from national leaders, expect to hear more of the same next year and for many years after that.

Today, we can be happy about Foote's bottom line, even though it fell short of expectations. We wonder how much longer the hospital can do well financially as the health-care system itself continues to be so sick.



www.heritage.org

The Middle-Class Welfare Kid Next Door

by Robert E. Moffit, Ph.D. and Greg D'Angelo

July 26, 2007 | 

[\[back to web version\]](#)

Imagine three families with something surprising in common.

Matt and Elizabeth Cuneo and their two children live in Hartford, Conn. Matt makes \$38,290 a year as a private investigator; Elizabeth, a state legislator, earns \$32,730.

The Wilsons own a house outside Washington, D.C., in the suburb of Derwood, Md. Charlie's job as a presidential speechwriter at the White House pays \$60,000 a year; wife Lindsay, a home health aide, makes \$20,100. They have four kids.

Finally, Joe and Eileen Bailey and their three children reside in a Nassau County suburb of New York City. Joe sells insurance, Eileen works part time as an administrative assistant in a doctor's office. Together, they pull in about \$75,000 a year.

It's not just being middle class that makes these families -- fictional, but based on labor statistics -- alike. Some in Congress say the Cuneo, Wilson and Bailey kids all ought to be entitled to "free" government-run health care intended for poor children.

Sounds preposterous. Yet that's exactly what the straight-faced proponents of vastly increased spending and eligibility for the State Children's Health Insurance Program intend.

Liberals aim to turn SCHIP, up for reauthorization in Congress, into a taxpayer-funded entitlement for the middle class. In fact, if Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) gets her way, nearly three out of every four children would be eligible for taxpayer-subsidized health care.

SCHIP was created in 1997 to help states cover medical expenses for children in low-income working families who didn't qualify for Medicaid health benefits for the truly poor and couldn't afford private insurance. The original budget for this federal block-grant program: \$40 billion over 10 years.

Eligibility was targeted for households at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line. That's a \$40,000 income for a family of four. Over the years, state officials found ways to enroll better-off kids. About 25 percent of all children were covered by Medicaid or SCHIP in 1998; by 2005 that number had jumped to an estimated 45 percent.

Now liberals are floating proposals to nearly quadruple SCHIP spending by budgeting \$75 billion over five years. Some, Sen. Clinton among them, want to double eligibility levels to *four* times the poverty line.

If they prevail, Uncle Sam would pay the medical bills of kids whose parents earn as much as \$82,600 a year. The cap would be much higher for families larger than four -- \$110,440 in the case of the six Wilsons.

Already, on July 19, the Senate Finance Committee voted 17-4 to extend SCHIP eligibility to families making up to three times the poverty line. Officials in states such as Connecticut and Maryland, where that's already the cap, or New York, where the cap is four times poverty, could continue to cover better-off children by gaming the system.

The Middle-Class Welfare Kid Next Door

(Hint: It depends on what the definition of "income" is.)

If the names Joe and Eileen Bailey ring a bell, incidentally, it may be because the Long Island couple was dreamed up by Chuck Schumer, New York's senior senator, to help him understand the concerns of typical constituents. Schumer popularized the Baileys in his recent book, "Positively American: Winning Back the Middle-Class Majority One Family at a Time." He describes the Baileys as "middle class by New York standards," but he's part of the Finance Committee majority that voted to put kids like theirs on the dole.

Joe Bailey, being in insurance, probably would shake his head in disbelief at the idea of Schumer crowding out his industry and its clients by having the government provide "free" care to middle-class kids at the doctor's office where Joe's wife, Eileen, works.

Paradoxically, the government soon would consider thousands of families to be both so "rich" that they must pay the Alternative Minimum Tax (originally designed to target the wealthy) and so "poor" that their children are entitled to subsidized health care.

Twisting SCHIP's original purpose like this creates a Trojan horse to conceal the ultimate agenda: imposing universal, government-run health care -- one middle-class child at a time.

A better policy would refocus the program on low-income kids and make private coverage more accessible to others through premium assistance. Policymakers also should look to reforming tax treatment of health insurance that discourages portability and ownership of coverage; offering tax credits to make insurance more affordable; and allowing interstate commerce to nourish real competition.

If liberals succeed in expanding a targeted "safety net" program like SCHIP to cover real-life Cuneos, Wilsons and Baileys, it will be that much easier for them to justify marching on to full-blown government-run health care.

It's time for common sense to stop the march in its tracks.

[Robert E. Moffit, Ph.D.](#) is the director of The Heritage Foundation's Center for Health Policy Studies, where Greg D'Angelo is a research assistant.

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Clinics serve critical need

Facilities reduce expensive visits to emergency rooms

By NICOLE GERRING Times Herald

Bursitis in her shoulder, bulging discs in her back and a recently discovered blocked artery are just a few of the medical problems Mary Schoen has developed through the years.

All told, Schoen, 51, of Marine City takes about \$751 worth of prescription medications each month, and she doesn't pay a dime - thanks to the Peoples' Clinic for Better Health in Port Huron.

"They are a godsend. They're wonderful here. The doctors take care of me."

Schoen, who hasn't had insurance since the factory at which she worked closed in 1997, is among scores of people in the Blue Water Area and nationwide who depend solely on small, neighborhood clinics that provide medical care free or on a sliding-fee scale.

The clinics, whether privately funded like Peoples' or federally funded like the Algonac Medical Center, are safety nets that experts said not only treat medical problems but prevent them; therefore reducing overall health-care costs.

Bob Peoples, interim chief executive officer of Downriver Community Services, which oversees the Algonac Medical Center, said studies have shown community health centers reduce costs to Michigan taxpayers by \$17 to \$18 million annually.

Still, federal dollars pay for only 29 health clinics in Michigan's 83 counties and getting government support to open a new clinic, even in counties such as Sanilac that don't have one, can be difficult, experts said.

The need

Rising unemployment levels have increased the number of uninsured local residents, health



Times Herald photos by MELISSA

LISTENING CLOSE: Dr. Brian Mul Schoen's heart Wednesday during for Better Health in Our Lady of Gu Huron. Schoen underwent a surgic coronary artery blockage.

RESOURCES

HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

- The St. Clair and Sanilac co some types of free and reduced

- Call the St. Clair County He: 5300. Call the Sanilac County H: 648-2646.

TO LEARN MORE

ALGONAC MEDICAL CENTER

- The medical center, part of I Services, is at 555 St. Clair Rive call (810) 794-4917.

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care officials said.

A 2005 phone survey conducted by the St. Clair County Health Department found that 11.7% of county residents between the ages of 18 and 64 lacked health insurance, said Sue Amato, health educator with the St. Clair County Health Department.

Amato said those numbers are the most recent available.

In Michigan, the percentage of uninsured people increased from 10.1% in 1995 to 11.4% in 2004, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Nationally, that number is about 16%, according to the National Coalition on Health Care.

Increasing numbers of uninsured people - or people with insufficient coverage - means longer lines at local clinics.

People line up as early as 4 or 5 a.m. on the days the Peoples' Clinic opens for a chance to be seen by a doctor, said Linda Lalonde, clinic director and nurse.

The Algonac Medical Center served 38,000 people in 2006 and 35,900 people in 2005. Of those patients, about three-quarters did not have private insurance.

Local benefit

The community health center in Algonac provides a variety of services for area residents, such as dental care, behavioral health

treatment, prescription drug discounts, prenatal care, cancer screenings and diabetes treatment.

About 80% of the illnesses treated at the Peoples' Clinic are maintenance diseases such as asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease, Lalonde said.

The uninsured may leave problems such as diabetes or high blood pressure untreated until the last minute, when they become severely ill with complications from those illnesses.

The staff of the Port Huron Hospital Emergency Room often sees uninsured patients suffering from the effects of diseases that could have been managed with regular care, said Dan Angeli, vice president of medical affairs at the hospital.

He said emergency room bills can range from a couple of hundred dollars to thousands of dollars for treatment such as saving someone who has a heart attack.

"The issue with getting your care at the emergency department is those individuals tend to wait until the very end. They've gotten themselves so sick, they eventually have to go to the hospital."

He said the hospital has an obligation to treat all those who present

- The clinic is at Our Lady of C 3110 Goulden St., Port Huron. 1 4747.



Times Herald photos by MELISS

WIDE OPEN: Dr. David Hindy, right Ryan Falcheck, 21, of East China 1 exam at the Algonac Medical Cent and run by Downriver Community 3 38,000 people in 2006.



Bob Peoples

themselves in the ER, regardless of their ability to pay.

Because of the shape of the local economy, the hospital has seen its amount of bad debt, now \$7.5 million, rise \$1.5 million from June 2006 to June 2007, Angeli said.

National problem

The federal government isn't unaware of the problems caused by the gaps in health insurance coverage.

Nationally, community health centers serve more than 14 million poor and uninsured patients. Since 2000, the Bush administration and Congress have nearly doubled annual spending on community health centers, to almost \$2 billion. That's the largest increase in the history of the public health program, born during the 1960s War on Poverty.

Since 2000, the number of centers has increased by more than 200 and the number of patients they treat has risen by 4.5 million, or 53%.

The centers must meet a number of requirements to qualify for federal funding. They must be in areas that are medically underserved, with high poverty rates.

Linda Norris, director of state related assistance and special projects in the National Association of Community Health Centers in Washington D.C., said the federal government looks at community health centers as models of effective government-managed health care.

"We see health centers as being able to help with those who are uninsured, caught in the middle," she said. "As we look to moving to a new system, we see community health centers as possibly being part of that solution."

Although Downriver Community Services is grateful for generous federal funding, Peoples of the Algonac clinic said funding hasn't increased enough nationally.

"I don't believe the increase in funding matches the cost of operations and the percentage increase in the number of uninsured," he said.

He said the center provides top quality care, regardless of the patients' ability to pay.

"The measure of the quality is the willingness of people to seek you out to provide care for not only themselves, but for families, friends," he said.

Despite the need for more health care options for poor and uninsured people, it's not likely the federal government will fund additional centers in the Blue Water Area, Peoples said. The centers must meet certain definitions and the area must be able to support the cost of operating the center.

"These are still businesses that have to be operated economically," he said. "Like it or not in this kind of environment, you have to have an adequate number of patients and a large number of Medicaid/Medicare patients."

**Contact Nicole Gerring at (810) 989-6270 or ngerring@gannett.com.
Gannett News Service contributed.**



WRAPPING UP: Dr. David Hindy wrapped a patient's burned wrist with gauze, Thursday, at Downriver Community Service's Algonac clinic.

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Article published Jul 26, 2007

Sen. Cassis' Lansing Connection

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Senate acts to help new parents improve parenting skill

The Michigan Senate recently passed a resolution that strongly encourages the U.S. Congress to enact the Education Begins at Home Act. The measure would maintain programs designed to help improve parenting skills and promote healthy child development.

The programs provide voluntary coaching to parents of children up to five years old in home settings. Common programs include the Nurse Family Partnership, Parent-Child Home and Parents as Teachers.

The Parents as Teachers program offers services to residents throughout Michigan to help provide the information, support and encouragement that parents need to help their children develop optimally during the crucial early years of life.

Programs aimed at helping new parents develop better parenting skills are critical because parents are their child's first teachers.

Each year, approximately 2.7 million children are abused or neglected in the United States. During 2005 in Michigan alone, 147,628 abuse and neglect investigations were conducted. In one-third of the confirmed cases, the victims were three years old or younger.

As always, I look forward to your comments. You can contact me by e-mail at sennccassis@senate.michigan.gov, or toll free at 1-888-38-NANCY.



Federal grant to fund after-school program

Friday, July 27, 2007

By Chad Livengood

clivengood@citpat.com -- 768-4918

A \$150,000 federal grant will fund an after-school program at Hunt Elementary School this fall aimed at hands-on learning.

Highfields Inc., a human service agency with offices in Jackson and Onondaga, has secured a \$300,000 grant to provide after-school academic enrichment and recreational activities at Hunt and Gardner Middle School in Lansing.

Highfields will supply staff for recreational activities and hire Hunt teachers for academic courses. The 32-week program will be three hours daily, Monday through Thursday.

"It's going to be a collaborative process," said Tracy Feazel, program manager at Highfields.

The program is designed for 90 students and is open to all students.

Students will get to choose from six academic classes and two recreational activities, which will include behavior management, outside sports, arts and crafts, Principal Mary Jo Raczkowski-Shannon, principal at Hunt School, 1143 N. Brown St.

"It's going to be project oriented," she said of the academics courses. "It's not going to be like sitting in a classroom lecture."

The federal grant comes from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which requires the after-school programs have a family component built into the curriculum.

Raczkowski-Shannon said the one-year grant is renewable for four additional years.

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Family of girl, 3, calls death a terrible tragedy; dad's arraignment set today

Friday, July 27, 2007

By Danielle Quisenberry

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Fighting tears, family members called Victoria Brower a compliant child who liked to dress like a Disney princess and eat pancakes on Sunday mornings -- a loved girl who suffered a preventable fate.

"It just wrecks your heart," said Hessie Shepherd of Munith, Victoria's great-grandmother. "It's terrible, a terrible tragedy that could have been avoided."

Victoria, 3, was found dead, face-down in her bed early Wednesday in the home she shared with her father, Paul Brower, 25, and stepmother, Trina, on W. Biddle Street.

Brower -- who, through a default judgment was granted full custody of Victoria last year -- was expected to be arraigned at 12:30 p.m. today on charges of premeditated murder, felony murder and first-degree child abuse.

The murder charges carry mandatory penalties of life in prison.

Paul Brower's father, Thomas Brower, said he can't believe his son committed the crimes. "He's not like that ... deep inside, I just know he didn't do it."

Shepherd and her daughter, Rita Jewell, Victoria's grandmother, said more should have been done to keep their granddaughter safe.

They said both of them and Victoria's mother, Jessica Jewell, 22, fought Brower to see the child, but were not allowed visits.

Brower was granted full custody of his daughter on May 1, 2006, after Jessica Jewell failed to appear in court for a custody-related hearing, according to court records.

"I think the system failed," said Shepherd, who cared for Victoria almost every day early in the girl's life.

She said she would read the little girl stories and feed her the pancakes and sausage she always wanted for breakfast. "She was so smart. She was beyond her years because of what she went through," she said.

Shepherd said she twice complained to the Department of Human Services about Brower's treatment of her granddaughter, but no action was taken.

On July 30, 2006, Rita Jewell filed a police report alleging possible child abuse, Jackson Deputy Chief Matt Heins said. The report did not result in any charges or action against Brower.

Rita Jewell said she was told the claims were not substantiated.

As family members were interviewed Thursday, a pink Easter dress that Jewell had purchased for Victoria

hung neatly nearby and two Cinderella slippers sat on a blue pillow; Cinderella

was Victoria's favorite princess.

"She was precious, absolutely precious," Rita Jewell said, wiping away tears.

Lately, she said she had become increasingly frustrated because she couldn't see Victoria.

Shepherd said she and Rita Jewell sought an attorney's advice about seeking more time with her, but were told as grandmothers they had few rights.

Meanwhile, Rita Jewell said her daughter, who was living in Battle Creek, was trying to get her life together, had just received a job promotion and was going to try again for custody.

A court hearing was set for September, according to court records.

Before the May 2006 hearing, Jessica Jewell and Paul Brower had shared custody as the two, who met while Jewell was in high school, lived together from 2003 to 2005, court records show.

Early last year after the couple had split, Jessica Jewell petitioned the court to allow her to keep Victoria a majority of the time, alleging Brower frequently left the girl with Jewell when Brower was supposed to take her. Brower, who was working for Kelly Services, wanted shared custody and denied the claims he would not pick up his daughter.

He said Jessica Jewell would leave Victoria with him for a week at a time.

After he was granted custody, he filed a motion in June alleging his former fiancée wasn't paying child support and, without access to a car, wasn't picking up Victoria, who was instead being "bounced around" between her grandmothers.

Thomas Brower, standing in his driveway in Munith, said his son was a good father to Victoria.

"To him, she was a breath of sunshine," he said, thinking fondly of his granddaughter, who frequently spent time at his home. Her toys were scattered in his back lawn.

With his son behind bars and Victoria gone, it seems he's lost two children, he said. He still hasn't been able to take the child seat out of his car, he said. "It's hard. It's

really hard. I can't even function."

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